

Acknowledgements

There are many people I would like to thank, each of whom has helped make the three and a bit years preparing this thesis, just about bearable. Top of the list is my supervisor Professor Graham Bailey, who was always on hand to provide suggestions, help and advice, and who played such a big part in the award of my Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship.

Special thanks also go to Professor Roy Moffett, Dr Richard Balthazor, Dr Yuanzhi Su, Chris Wilford, and everyone else in the Applied Maths Department. Each gave up time and knowledge in equal measure. Thanks are also due to Professor Rod Heelis, Jackie Heelis, Sarita Venkatramen, and all the folks at University of Texas, Dallas, who helped make my time in the US unforgettable, and introduced me to the delights of Mexican cuisine!

I'd also like to thank my parents, David and Pamela, my brothers Paul and James, and my children Kate and April. Each of you has had to put up with my bad moods and incoherent explanations at one time or another (whether you liked it or not).

Last, but by no means least, the biggest thanks of all go to my partner Josephine Bird who's idea it all was, and to whom this thesis is dedicated.

For Josephine...

The work in this thesis was supported by a PPARC studentship, and the award of a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship.